FY 2019
SMALL NEPA PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Please **do not leave any field BLANK**, unless it does not apply.
Submit form (Word doc) electronically to jjchynoweth@fs.fed.us by **February 7, 2020.**

(NOTE: Italicized / red comments are for reference only. You may delete them after completing form.)

Project Name	Midnight Star Placer Exploration
District Name (or "Forestwide")	Red River Ranger District
County where project located?	Idaho County
FS Personnel Name, Phone Number and Email *If a partnership, please add name, phone and email; however, **an FS employee MUST BE the project proponent** and point of contact.*	Marty Jones (208)983-5158 martin.jones@usda.gov
Legal Location *Township(s), Range(s), and Section(s) of project.*	T29N, R7E, Boise Meridian, Sections 17, 18
Decision Maker's Name District Ranger/Line Officer *responsible for signing the decision document*	Terry Nevius
Is the project associated with meeting a Forest target?	Minerals Plan Administration (T12)
Which CE Category does this project fit? *Provide citation: 36 CFR 220.6(e)(x)* *See below regarding 220.6(d)(x) projects.*	36CFR220.6(e)8 Short-term (1 year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.

At what level does the Decision Maker want the project scoped?

Internal___ External X

Provide a list of the individuals, groups, agencies, etc. (other than those listed below*) with their mailing address and/or email address, of those who will be included for *External* Scoping.

- DO NOT provide only a name.
- DO NOT leave this box blank: If **no additional individuals** are to be **externally scoped** please enter **NA**.

Ron Miller
675 Wall Creek Road
Stites, ID 83552

Does the Decision Maker want a Legal Notice published in the Lewiston Tribune? Yes

What Level of Analysis (below) does the Decision Maker want for the Project?

_____ **Low level:** Choose this level if the project's level of public scrutiny is expected to be relatively low or unknown. Documentation for low level analysis projects would be a completed Extraordinary Circumstances checklist filled out by the specialists, including the name of the specialist who performed the analysis, the project name, and date it was completed. No other written documentation would be generated.

__X__ **Moderate level:** Choose this level if the project's level of public scrutiny is expected to be relatively moderate to high. In this case, specialists would complete the Extraordinary Circumstances checklist with the only write up being for resources that are present and the rationale for the effects call. No write up would be given for items in the checklist that are not present.

If the determination is no effect (which most CE's should have zero to very little adverse effects), then document *why* that determination was made in one paragraph or less. If the determination is an adverse effect, then *why* that determination was made would be written in less than three paragraphs.

List the Management Area(s) in which your project is located.

MA 12B

What are the Goals and Standards* for the Management Area(s) listed above that are *relevant to your project*? MANAGEMENT AREA 12 (539,884 acres)

A. Description

Management Area 12 consists primarily of forested lands. Timber productivity classes 3, 4, 5, and 6 are represented as are a variety of commercially valuable, softwood tree species. A variety of physical and biological environments occur as determined by soil, slope, aspect, elevation (approximately 3,800-6,500 feet), and climatic factors. This management area occurs across the entire non-classified portion of the Forest. Although this management area consists primarily of productive forest land, there are minor inclusions of non-forest and low productivity forest lands.

This management area contains inclusions of other management areas as shown below:

Management Area / Inclusion Acres

1 / 10,489
8 / 10
10 / 4,695
11 / 4
16 / 11,492
17 / 760
19 / 8,240
20 / 22,327
21 / 13,157

In addition to the 539,884 acres mapped for this management area, there are approximately 29,193 acres of this management emphasis which occur as inclusions in other management areas.

B. Goals

Manage for timber production and other multiple uses on a sustained yield basis. Develop equal distribution of age classes to optimize sustained timber production. Manage at levels and intensities consistent with the schedules described in this plan to provide for other multiple uses and resources. Manage for roaded natural recreation.

The goal for summer elk habitat in this management area is to manage 109,444 acres to achieve at least 75 percent of habitat potential; 310,544 acres to achieve at least 50 percent of habitat potential; and 114,225 acres to achieve at least 25 percent of habitat potential. Specific methods of how to achieve this will be determined on a site-specific basis during project planning (see Appendix B).

The goals and standards for minerals management as outlined under Chapter 2 of the Nez Perce Forest Plan are:

"Mineral resource activities will be administered under the appropriate laws and regulations to insure protection of surface resources while not unduly interfering with mining operations. Exploration and development of mineral resources will be facilitated by providing timely responses to Notices of Intent and Operating Plans. Emphasis will be put on working actively with operators to develop adequate operating plans and to obtain sufficient bonds to cover estimated reclamation needs. The frequency of inspections of ongoing operations will be commensurate with their size and complexity and will ensure adequacy of operating plans and identify unforeseen environmental impacts. Reclamation of disturbed areas to a productive condition will be required in all cases."

** Goals and Standards are described in Chapter 3 of the Nez Perce and Clearwater Forest Plans. Include any **relevant** Forestwide Standards found in Chapter 2 of the Forest Plans as well.*

Is the project in a designated Idaho Roadless Area (IRA)? No
Is the project in a congressionally designated area, ex. Wilderness Area, Wild & Scenic River Corridor, Research Natural Area, Historic Trail, etc.? No
Are there Floodplains or Wetlands in the project area? Yes
Are there Municipal Watersheds in the project area? No If yes, which one?
Is the project located in an RHCA? Yes
Describe the Existing Conditions of the project area. The project area lies within riparian and upland areas of a small tributary of Newsome Creek. The area is vegetated with riparian and upland vegetation and timber of mixed species. The area of proposed activities has been partly affected by historic placer mining activities. A primitive, narrow road/trail accesses the area from the junction of FSR440 and FSR 440D.
Describe the Desired Conditions of the project. At the conclusion of the project, the project site will be returned to as close to original conditions as practicable through concurrent reclamation and applied mitigation measures
What is the Purpose and Need for the proposed action*? The Forest Service's purpose in proposing this action (approval of the Proposed Action) is to minimize adverse environmental impacts on resources by regulating the functions, work, and activities connected with the plan for mineral exploration activities on NFS lands. The compelling need for the Forest Service to take this action is to comply with legal requirements in response to the proposed Plan of Operations (as defined in 36 CFR 228.5) and to ensure that "operations are conducted so as, where feasible, to minimize adverse environmental impacts on National Forest surface resources" (as defined in 36 CFR 228.8).

Describe the Proposed Action.

What is provided will be used in the Scoping Letter (*external only*), by the resource specialists for their effects analyses, and in the Decision document.

Ron Miller and Marty Sanford wish to conduct placer exploration mining activities on the Red River Ranger District. The location of the proposed project area is in sections 17 and 18, Township 29 North, Range 7 East, Boise Meridian, near the head of a small tributary of Newsome Creek. The project area will be accessed from State Highway 14 at Leggett Creek Campground, to Forest Service Road (FSR) 649 to FSR 440, to the junction of FSR440 and FSR 440D. From there an existing trail will be taken southeast approximately one half mile to the project area.

Exploration will be conducted by conducting trenching down to bedrock to extract placer samples for analysis. The number of proposed trenches is 20 and will be sized approximately 4 feet wide by 16 feet long down to bedrock, if possible. Bedrock is estimated to be 8-12 feet deep. Total surface disturbance of trenches will be approximately 0.3 acres.

Excavation will be accomplished by a 750 or similar sized backhoe, or a similar sized track mounted excavator. No road construction or reconstruction is proposed, but overland travel by backhoe will be necessary to access trench sites. Some brush and deadfall clearing will be necessary. Felling of live trees will be avoided when possible, and necessary felling and removal of up to 20 live trees will be approved by the District Ranger beforehand.

Trenches will be tested by use of a trommel that will recirculate process water through two settling ponds sized 8 feet by 8 feet and four feet deep, capable of containing 1900 gallons of process water each. A 3 inch highbanker will also be used to process small samples. Process water will be hauled from Elk City to the project site if possible. In the event that water is drawn from streams within the Forest, an Idaho Department of Water Resources permit will be obtained prior to withdrawal.

No process water will be allowed to discharge within fifty feet of any stream or wetland. Excess water will be allowed to percolate naturally into surrounding substrate and forest duff. No instream trenching will occur. If sediment becomes mobilized by storm water runoff, silt fencing and straw wattles will be utilized to stop/divert runoff and prevent erosion and sediment delivery. Silt fencing will also be used to prevent sediment runoff from overburden stockpiles as necessary. If extremely wet conditions occur, work will be halted.

As work progresses, tailings will be replaced into the open trench. As work at each trench is completed, it will be backfilled with overburden, existing stockpiled duff, vegetative matter and woody debris will be applied, and the area seeded and mulched.

Concurrent reclamation will be utilized. Only one trench will be open at a time. All disturbed areas will be reseeded with a Forest Service approved seed mixture as required.

Equipment to be used onsite includes: a 750 or equivalent sized backhoe or tracked excavator, 2 ATVs, a self-contained recirculatory trommel, 3 inch highbanker, chain saw and other hand tools. Crew will consist of 2 operators and two laborers, for a total of 4 personnel. Work shifts will be 10 hours.

No structures will be built on site. Camping will occur at Leggett Creek Campground. An alternate campsite would be Sing Lee Campground on Newsome Creek. Tents and/or fifth wheel campers will be used for camping. Access from this site would be FSR 440A (West Fork Newsome Creek Road) to the project site.

Hydrocarbons will be stored in covered secondary containment and a spill kit will be maintained at refueling sites. Spills exceeding one gallon will be reported to the District Ranger and contaminated soils will be excavated and removed according to applicable regulations. No more than fifty gallons of fuel will be stored

List the Design Criteria / Mitigation Measures * to be included with the Proposed Action.

General Requirements (NOTE: These are general requirements for mining related activities. Not all listed requirements are relevant to this proposed action. All requirements that *are* relevant to this proposal will be adhered to.)

1. Notify District Ranger or minerals administrator at least 48 hours before any work is to begin.

2. Wash all vehicles and equipment used at the site before being brought onto National Forest system lands to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, seeds or propagules.

3. Avoid disturbance of wetlands and stream riparian zones.

4. Avoid working on saturated soils. Exploration activities must cease to avoid sedimentation into intermittent streams if excessive storm water or ground water runoff is occurring.

5. Prevent discharge of water into any live stream or wetland. To avoid erosion and discharge impact to streams, all activities (including drilling, construction of pads, hand-dug sumps, and any overland travel) will be kept at least 164 feet (50 m) from flowing water that is down gradient.

6. Place weed free straw bales or install silt fence in places as identified by a Forest Service representative to minimize sediment migration from stockpiles and disturbed ground.

7. Obtain prior approval from the Forest Service for cutting or removal of trees or other large live vegetation. Downfall may be removed as needed.

8. Set aside cleared slash and green vegetation (e.g., bear grass) during test pit construction. Remove vegetation in clumps, if possible, with the soil mass intact. Store excavated topsoil and subsoil in separate stockpiles to be used during reclamation. Temporarily replant vegetation clumps in the topsoil stockpile.

9. Maintain only one (1) active pit or trench open at any one time. Reclamation may be occurring at one (1) other pit or trench concurrently.

10. To help alleviate the need for field crew to decide if fish are present in water withdrawal locations, a 3/32” screen will be installed on pump intake hoses even when utilizing a 5-gallon bucket with drilled holes. Water withdrawals will be located on small, high gradient streams as far up creek drainages as feasible to avoid habitat used by fish and sourced from streams under existing permits from the State of Idaho.

11. Collect process water in the existing pit. Regulate discharge to prevent overtopping the pit, and/or land apply excess water on a site designated by the Forest Service. Application sites will typically be natural sumps or depressions, pits or trap(s) that avoid impacts to wetlands or streams and minimizes impacts to other surface resources. Application rate will be such that overland flow is avoided and a natural infiltration occurs through forest duff.

12. Backfill and reclaim each test pit as soon as testing has been completed for that site.

13. Follow the State of Idaho Best Management Practices (BMPs) for all surface disturbing activities, reclamation, and abandonment. BMPs are outlined in the Best Management Practices for Mining in Idaho

Small NEPA IDT/resource specialists are listed below. Contact them if you have any questions regarding their resource for your project.

Botany – Mike Hays, mike.hays@usda.gov; 983-4028
Fisheries – Derrick Bawdon, derrick.bawdon@usda.gov; 963-4211
Heritage – Christy Mog, christy.mog@usda.gov; 935-4269
Hydrology – Cynthia Valle, cynthis.valle@usda.gov; 963-4203
Minerals – Marty Jones, martin.jones@usda.gov; 983-5158
Recreation – Carol Hennessey, cahennessey@fs.fed.us; 935-4270
Soils – Alex Rozin, alexandra.rozin@usda.gov, 842-2100
Wild and Scenic River – Chris Noyes, chris.noyes@usda.gov; 935-4251
Wildlife – Jim Lutes, james.r.lutes@usda.gov; 963-4202

Small NEPA Planner – Jeff Chynoweth, james.chynoweth@usda.gov; 935-4260

PROJECT MAPS

Please send – separate from this form and per the instructions outlined below – a GIS-generated map or maps of the project area (pdf format only) with the project submission email.

- Make sure that the map layers can be turned on / off / are editable.
- Make sure the map(s) fits on an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper.

Provide at least one map, preferably "portrait" orientation, with the project area / features as:

- a Point, e.g. culvert, bridge, etc.,
- a Line, e.g. fence, road, creek, etc., and/or
- a Polygon, e.g. stand boundaries, treatment areas, etc.
    - Do not use a point if treating an area, use a polygon.
    - Points/lines/polygons need to be distinct and easily found on the map.
    - The project area / site needs to be centered on the map, especially if only one area/feature.

Please use the Forest Visitor Map as your map's base layer.

- Do not add contour lines to the FV map unless needed for clarifying the proposed action. Contour lines can make the map difficult to read.
    - If contour lines are needed, make sure they are distinguishable from other linear features such as roads, trails, streams, etc.
- A topo map can be substituted for the FV map. If using a topo map but the contour lines are not important the topo lines should be light gray or opaque.
- Regardless of base map, make sure there are identifiable elements, e.g. towns, roads, streams, etc. on the map to help locate the project area on the landscape and that the elements are clearly labeled.

The preferred map scale (typically 1:24K) is whatever scale best presents the project area's location and proposed activities:

- If the 1:24K scale is too small (i.e. the project feature(s) – point/line/polygon – would be hard to find or would be indistinguishable on just one map), use a larger scale to show the overall project area (coarse scale map) and smaller scaled maps to show the project features (fine scale map).
- If the 1:24K scale is too big (i.e. the project feature is a tiny point or thin line lost/hard to find on the larger landscape), use a smaller scale to highlight the feature while ensuring there are elements on the map to identify the project's location.
- If you need to make additional maps, please make as few as possible.

At a minimum, all maps should include (with the preferred but not set in stone location on the map):

- a Title (project name and district name only (please); centered at top)
- a Legend (features clearly labeled; lower right corner)
- a Scale (in half mile, e.g. 0__0.25__0.5 miles, or full miles, e.g. 0__0.25__0.5__1.0 miles; lower left corner)
- a North Arrow (upper right corner)
    - Display all of the above in boxes with black outlines and a white backgrounds (not gray or yellow)
    - Do not 'Halo' the text or numbers or anything else on the map. Please.
    - The Scale needs to be large enough to read the numbers.

Finally, please include the mapmakers name and the date it was created on the map.

The Map(s) you provide will be used for Scoping the Public and the Tribes and in the Decision document. Please make sure they show – clearly, effectively, and professionally – what activity or activities are being proposed and where they are located on the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests.

SHAPEFILES

The resource specialists require the shapefile(s) of the project's proposed activities before they will conduct their analyses. Providing the shapefile does not substitute for providing a pdf map.

The Project Proponent needs to send the shapefile, or a location where the shapefile can be found, to the Small NEPA Planner (currently: jjchynoweth@fs.fed.us) by the time or shortly after the District Ranger submits this form.

- Shapefiles need to include the Project Name and have the Feature (culvert, bridge, etc.) labeled.
- Shapefiles need to include the following extensions – .dbf, .prj, .sbn, .shp, .shx, and .xml.

Projects in Roadless Area

What is the Inventoried Roadless Area name? *O:\NFS\NezPerceClearwater\Project\MultiBasin\Planning\ Small_NEPA_Cat_Ex\Reference Material\Roadless Rule Info*	**Forest Plan IRA Name *(if different)*:**
Identify the Idaho Roadless Management Classification: • *Wild Land Recreation* • *Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance* • *Primitive* • *Backcountry Restoration* • *General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland*	**Classification(s):**
Does the project involve constructing or reconstructing roads? Yes* No * If yes, see *http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2* then navigate to Subpart C 294.23	
Does the project involve cutting trees? Yes* No * *If yes, see http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2* then navigate to Subpart C 294.24	
Does the project involve removing minerals, including common variety minerals? Yes* No * *If yes, see http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title36-vol2* then navigate to Subpart C 294.25	

JC : 9/16/2019

Additional Information: